

Story 957 (1977 Tapes 5
and 6)

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Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza,
Yozgat Province

Date: January 4, 1977

From Politics and War
to the Rose and the Nightingale

my Tex
76-83

Back in the old days, time within time,¹ when the sieve was in the straw,² when the camel was a town crier, when the flea was a wrestler and the goat was a barber, when the turtle was a judge and the ant was cross-eyed. It was back in such a time that in the old Turkish bath the bathkeeper had no metal bowl,³ the woodcutter had no axe, the women going to the bath had no bundle, and their waist cloth had no center part.

I said then, "Lady, if I should give you a kiss "

¹ Zaman zaman içinde (time within time) is a brief moment in real time when a person dreams or imagines that he/she has years of experience. This concept of "frozen time" occurs fairly often in folktales, especially Turkish tales.

² The reference is to the large-mesh metal sieve used in threshing to separate the grain from the straw. The humor here lies in the ludicrous reversal: the sieve cannot be in the straw; the straw goes into the sieve.

³ There are usually no showers in a Turkish bath. People rinse off soap by throwing water over their bodies with a "bath dipper," a handleless metal bowl holding from a pint to a quart of water. These bowls are like small saucepans.

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And she said, "Son, let's hear your story."

It was back then when my mother was on the threshold, my father was in his cradle, and I was a fifteen-year-old boy, that they told me, "Your grandfather is coming from the Kâbe."⁴ Putting my mother on my back and taking my father in my arms, I went to welcome my grandfather home. I asked him, "Grandfather, why are you wet?"

He said, "It is because I dived into the sea, Son

I asked, "Was it grinding very well?"

He answered, "I heard the noise of the millstone, Son

Then I asked, "Grandfather, why is your moustache so oily?"

He said, "It is because I ate some quail meat, Son."

I asked, "Is there so very much fat in that meat?"

He said, "I saw it while it was flying, Son."

I then took my grandfather along with me to the house. There my mother gave me five kuruş⁵ and said to me, "Go and buy some salt."

⁴ Kâbe (usually spelled Kaaba) is the small building, within the grounds of the central mosque at Mecca, which houses the sacred Black Stone of Islam.

⁵ A kuruş is 1/100 of a Turkish lira. Now (1987) that the lira has been devaluated to 1/800 of a U.S. dollar, the kuruş has become meaningless. Until the late 1960s or early 1970s, however, prices of small items were still given in kuruş.

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In the old days they called salt hiç. In those same old days my brains were on the short side of things, and so to prevent myself from forgetting what I had been sent for, I began saying, "Hiç, hiç, hiç." As I was repeating this over over, I walked for a while along the seashore where some were fishing. They became very angry at me for saying, "Hiç, hiç, hiç," for in most places in Turkey hiç also means nothing, and nothing was exactly what the fishermen had been catching. They had been fishing all day without catching a single fish. They thought that the reason they had caught nothing was my saying, "Nothing, nothing, nothing." One of them slapped me very hard. I said, "Gentlemen, I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?"

He answered,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

Why did you speak to us that way?

I asked him, "What should I have said to you?"

He answered, "You should have said, 'Three or five together! Three or five together!'"⁶

Leaving the fishermen by the shore, I started walking again. As I walked, I kept saying, "Three or five together, three or five together." After a while I came to a funeral,

⁶ Instead of saying a couple or a few, Turks often say three or five.

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and the priests there overheard what I was saying. One of them slapped me very hard. Puzzled by this, I asked him, "Hoca Bey,⁷ I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?" ~~8-8, 79-80, 83~~

He answered,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

Do you want all of us to pass away?

I then asked him, "What should I have said?"

"You should have said, 'May God have mercy upon him /the corpse/. May God have mercy upon him.'"

Just then, however, there passed along the street a man dragging his dead ox. I was now saying, "May God have mercy upon him. May God have mercy upon him." When the owner of the dead ox heard me saying that, he boxed my ears hard. Surprised, I said to him, "Gentleman, I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you box my ears?"

He answered,

Why should I not box them--hey?

Why did you choose to speak that

I then asked him, "Oh Bey, what should I have said?"

⁷ Hoca means Moslem priest. Bey once meant lord or nobleman, but now it is a term of respect, roughly equivalent to sir.

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He answered, "You should have said, 'Ugh! What a bad smell Ugh! What a terrible smell!'"

I moved along then, and as I walked I kept repeating, "Ugh! What a bad smell! Ugh! What a terrible smell!" I was saying this as two ladies came out of a Turkish bath, looking very clean and smelling very fragrant

they heard what I was saying, one of them came to me and slapped me very hard. I said, "Lady, I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?"

She answered,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

What an insulting thing to say!

I then asked, "Well, what should I have said?"

She replied, "You should have said, 'Dear God, how fine! Dear God, how beautiful!'"

I continued to walk again, saying as I went, "Dear God, how fine! Dear God, how beautiful!" As I was saying this, I came upon two men who were fighting. As the first one struck the second, I said, "Dear God, how fine!" And as the second one hit the first, I said, "Dear God, how beautiful!" When they heard what I was saying, one of them boxed my ears Perplexed by this, I said, "Bey, I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you box my ears?"

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The man answered, "You should have said, 'Stop behaving that way, Gentlemen Break it up now, Gentlemen!'"

So I began saying that as I walked along. When I came to a dog fight, I said, "Stop behaving that way, Gentlemen! Break it up now, Gentlemen!" A man who happened to be passing by at that moment heard me saying that, and he slapped me alongside the head. I said to him, "My Ağa,⁸ I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?"
81, 82, 83

He answered,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

Dogs are not gentlemen--no, not they

"Then what should I have said?"

"You should have said, 'Hey! Pull and stretch! Hey Pull and stretch!'"

Walking along a little farther, I passed before a mosque. At the mosque door, several men who had removed their shoes were trying to put on their thin mosque slippers.⁹ As they were doing this, I said, "Hey Pull and stretch! Hey! Pull

⁸ Ağa is a title usually applied to rural landowners --men who are often wealthy and powerful. By extension, however, it may be used as a term of respect or flattery for any man of higher social status than the speaker.

⁹ The term used here by the storyteller is mest, which is defined as a light, thin-soled boot worn indoors. This is apparently a type of light foot covering not worn in the street but carried to the mosque in one's hand, and therefore permissible within the mosque.

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stretch!" When they heard me saying this, they grabbed the tops of their slippers and pulled them violently, tearing them. When this happened, one of the men came to me and slapped me. "My Ağa,^{82-83, 98} I said, "I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?"

He said,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

You made us destroy our nests today!

"Well, what should I have said?"

"You should have said, 'Pull gently and make it longer. Pull gently and make it longer.'"

As I was walking along after that I was repeating, "Pull gently and make it longer. Pull gently and make it longer

as I said that, an ağa came along pulling a slave by one ear. Hearing what I had said, the man pulled a little harder than he had been, with the result that he tore off the poor slave's ear. The ağa walked over and slapped me. I said "My Ağa, I'd sacrifice my soul for you. Why did you slap me?"

He answered,

Why should I not slap you--hey?

Your talking maimed a slave today!

"What should I have said?" I asked.

"Say nothing! Say hiç!"

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"Ah, thank you, Ağa Bey! Thank you for telling me that!" I was indeed thankful, for it was in this way that I remembered what I had been sent to the bazaar to get--salt! I bought some salt for five kuruş and took it home.

When I arrived there, I found my mother wrapping sarma¹⁰ in front of the fireplace. While she was doing this, I began to rock my father's cradle. I tried to reach over and grab one of the sarmas, but in doing so, I accidentally knocked my father's cradle upside down. My mother said, "May sarmas grow in your throat See what you have done now! You have broken your father's cradle!" Saying this, she grabbed the barley. I grabbed the sarma and ran away from there.

I ran away as fast as I could, and after a while I reached Ankara. There I broke off a minaret and stuck it in my sash as a pipe. There I also picked up many cannonballs and used them as grains of millet.

From Ankara I walked to the nearest village. The people of that village followed me around and stared at me as if I were a madman of some kind. A ~~snake~~ held me in its spell as if I were a dead man.

¹⁰ Sarma is a hot food made of rice and ground meat wrapped in grape or cabbage leaves. Sometimes this is called dolma, but the dolma may have a green pepper, an eggplant, or a tomato as its container instead of grape or cabbage leaves. The sarma is always wrapped in leaves. The word sarmak means to wrap

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Everything that I have said so far has been just the floor of my story.¹¹ The story itself will begin now.

One of our padişahs of the past had two very capable men working for him. One was named Köprülü Paşa,¹² and the other was known only as the Black Vizier. People throughout the world feared the Black Vizier. It was rumored that he was the cause of great injustice in İstanbul. Word of this reached even Moscow, and the Russians sent a ⁸⁴⁻⁸⁶spy to İstanbul to observe the activities of this man. Although that spy remained for three years, probing into every side of Turkish life, he could find nothing wrong with the government administration or the court system. He found only justice wherever he looked

One day this spy decided to observe what happened in some courtrooms. Entering a courtroom, he began listening to the trial in progress. Here is the issue at trial. A man

¹¹ Everything preceding this point constitutes a tekerleme, which is a humorous, nonsensical recital of silly, fantastic, and paradoxical events. Much of it is rhymed, and in this particular tekerleme there are more rhymed couplets than we have been able to achieve in English. The tekerleme has two primary functions: (1) to entertain the audience both by its ludicrous content and by the ingenuity of its rhymes and word play, and (2) to alert the audience to the fact that a tale will follow and to sharpen their wits for better appreciation of that tale.

¹² Paşa is a title. Now it means simply general. In the past it often designated the military governor of a province.

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had sold a horse to a second man, but after reconsidering this sale, he decided that he wanted his horse back. After listening to both sides of the case, the judge decided in favor of the first man, saying that the horse should be given back to its original owner. Inasmuch as the trial lasted until late afternoon, the judge told the owner of the horse that he could pick up his animal the next morning.

Early on the following day the owner went to the stable to get his horse, but when he arrived there, he found that his horse was dead. He went immediately to the judge to report this situation. The judge said, "Son, this is my fault. I should have had your horse returned to you yesterday. Tell me the value of your horse, and I shall pay that amount to you." When the owner told him the value of the horse, the judge paid him that amount from his own purse

When the spy observed all this, he realized that it was unlikely that he would find any serious injustice anywhere in Istanbul. He returned to his house and said to his landlord, "Find me a pretty woman. I shall pay her however much she wants for her services. But do not tell anyone else about this. It is to be known only among you and me and God

landlord went at once to his wife and said to her, "Woman, our tenant asked me to find a very pretty woman for him. He will pay such a woman very good money. Dress

Justice -
Concept of

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yourself elegantly and stay with that man for two or three so that we can get a good quantity of money."

The woman accepted this idea proposed by her husband. Dressing very attractively, she went to the spy's house, but after they had struck a bargain, the spy suddenly realized that she was his landlord's wife. He said to her, therefore, "You are a sister to me. Take this money and leave at once." Saying this, he handed her 200 liras, the amount they had agreed on as her daily fee.

The following morning the spy packed up his belongings and started back to Moscow. When he arrived there, all of the government officials assembled to inquire of him what he witnessed during his three-year stay in Istanbul. He reported, "During my three years there I did not see a single instance of injustice, but the people there have one great fault. They will do anything for money. They will even go so far as to sell you their wives for money."

When the other Russians heard this, they said, "Ah, yes! You have provided us with the information we need to get rid of the Black Vizier. We shall pay enough money to the other viziers to form a conspiracy against the Black Vizier."

Subsequently they carried out this plan. They gave substantial amounts of money to each of the other ten viziers to ruin the Black Vizier. These other viziers began to

Accusation
False
§ 7. 99

spread rumors about him. They would say, "Oh, the Black Vizier wants our padişah's throne. Sooner or later he will kill the padişah in order to possess his throne."

These rumors spread throughout the city, and at last day they reached the ears of the padişah himself. He called together the other ten viziers and asked them if there was any truth behind this gossip. They said to him, "Unfortunately, Your Majesty, the rumors that you have heard about the Black Vizier are accurate."

Greatly angered by this news, the padişah called to his presence Köprülü Paşa. He said to him, "Köprülü, the Black Vizier is to be executed, and his execution is a job that I am assigning to you."

Taking the Black Vizier to the gallows, Köprülü Paşa placed the rope around his neck and then had a picture of him taken¹³ in that condition. Then he said to the condemned man, "Black Vizier, here is a servant to accompany you. Go straight to the Watery-Stone¹⁴ Palace in Tokat. Hide yourself there, and do not reveal your identity to anyone. This

¹³ Although the Sultanate lasted for a century after the invention of photography, this may well be an anachronism in the tale.

¹⁴ Unacquainted with any palace so named, we have translated the name literally. The narrator calls it Sulukaya Sarayı.

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is an arrangement about which only you, I, and God should know." So the Black Vizier and his servant went secretly to the Watery-Stone Palace and hid themselves secretly there.

Now let us return to İstanbul. There Köprülü Paşa told everyone about the Black Vizier's execution, and thus it became general information that the Black Vizier was dead. News of this reached Moscow, too.

The Russian officials were very pleased with the news. They said among themselves, "The time which we have long awaited has at last arrived!" They sent a diplomatic dispatch to İstanbul in which they demanded all of the cities along the Black Sea coast. "Unless you surrender those cities to us, we shall declare war upon you," they said.

When the padişah read the Russian dispatch, he suddenly felt very ill, as if a snake had entered his stomach. He called a meeting of his ten viziers and Köprülü Paşa to discuss the situation. "Come, Gentlemen, and give me your opinions about a very serious matter. Moscow has sent us an ultimatum in which they demand that we surrender to them of our cities along the Black Sea coast. What shall we do? Shall we simply give them whatever they demand? Or, on the other hand, shall we make war against them?"

Some of the viziers said that they should surrender the cities demanded. Others said that they should make war

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rather than lose any cities. But the padişah was not satisfied with either of these options. Then he remembered how helpful the Black Vizier had always been in such crises, and he said, "Ah-h-h! Oh Black Vizier, how I wish that you could be here now!"

When Köprülü Paşa heard the padişah say this, he said "Oh-h-h, my Padişah, do you need the Black Vizier now?"

yes, yes! But it is now too late to get any help from him!"

Then Köprülü Paşa said, "Oh, my Padişah, if you would forgive the Black Vizier, you could see him again."

Very puzzled by this remark, the padişah asked Köprülü Paşa, "Didn't you hang the Black Vizier?"

Köprülü Paşa answered, "I knew, Your Majesty, that one day you would again need the services of the Black Vizier, and so I did not allow him to be hanged. Now write an imperial edict¹⁵ declaring your forgiveness of the Black Vizier. Sign it and give it to me, and then I shall reveal where the Black Vizier is."

Because the padişah was caught in a very difficult situation, he accepted the conditions imposed by Köprülü

¹⁵ The word for "imperial edict" or "imperial decree" is firman.

Firman
89 X 92

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Paşa without hesitating even a moment. He wrote and signed an imperial decree declaring his forgiveness of the Black Vizier. As soon as Köprülü Paşa had the edict in his hands, he gave it to a messenger and started that messenger immediately toward Tokat.

Back in those old days, people did not, of course, have any of the means of transportation that we now have. They had no trains or buses or airplanes in those days. The messenger had no choice but to walk in order to deliver the imperial edict. Now let the messenger walk while we report on what the Black Vizier and his servant were doing.

They had by this time spent all of their money, and they were in bad shape. Finally the Black Vizier sold even his gold ring. The money that he received for his ring he gave to his servant to get something for them to eat. They spent the ring money too, and they had reached the point at which they had only enough food left for one more meal.

The servant cooked that meal and he set it on the table to cool slightly. Accidentally, however, a mouse fell into the food, and they did not have the money to buy anything else. When the servant saw the mouse in the food, he reported this to the Black Vizier: "My great Vizier, I cooked our meal, but a mouse has fallen into it, and we have no money to buy any other food."

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Black Vizier said to him, "Son, do not worry about it. Our time has come."

Right at that very moment there was a knock on the door. When they opened the door, they saw the messenger. The Black Vizier took the padişah's imperial decree and read it. He then said to his servant, "Son, didn't I tell you that our time had come? Our punishment has been ended."

They prepared for their departure. As they were doing so, the Black Vizier said to his servant, "There is a very well-known man in Yozgat named Çapanoğlu. While we are on our way to İstanbul, we shall stop to greet this man and visit him briefly."

They reached Çapanoğlu's house without any difficulty. This Çapanoğlu had four sons. The youngest, known as Crazy Mehmet, was very fond of hunting. He hunted every day, and his three brothers took care of his hunting horse for him. They gave the horse food and water in the morning. Then when Crazy Mehmet returned from hunting in the evening, they cleaned the horse and again fed and watered it. After that they put it in the stable

When the Black Vizier arrived at Çapanoğlu's house, Çapanoğlu called together his three older sons and gave them some instructions about their behavior and their manners in the presence of the Black Vizier. He told them how to greet

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the Black Vizier, how they should enter a room, and how they should leave the room. Whenever the occasion arose, the three older brothers did exactly as their father had taught them to do

When their youngest brother came home from hunting, they said to Crazy Mehmet, "Brother, there is a man in the guest room who is known as the Black Vizier. Our father has taught us how we should act in his presence." They then repeated to their brother all of the things that their father had taught them.

Crazy Mehmet was not very impressed by all of this, however. Nor was he impressed by the presence of the Black Vizier. "What is all this fuss about? He is just an ordinary man, and he will not eat you." He was, after all, Crazy Mehmet. He forgot all about the advice his brothers had passed along to him concerning his behavior in the presence of their guest. He opened the door with his foot, making a great noise. He walked right into the room where the Black Vizier was. There he said, "Oh, Sir, welcome, welcome How are you?"

Black Vizier then asked Çapanoğlu, "What is his name?"

"His name is Mehmet," Çapanoğlu answered

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Then the Black Vizier said, "I shall give him a second name. I now name him Celâl. From this time on, he will be known as Mehmet Celâl."

After he had eaten and drunk, the Black Vizier left Çapanoğlu's house and continued on his way to İstanbul. When he arrived in that city, everyone there was amazed to learn that he was not dead but very much alive. This news also reached Moscow, where the officials quickly changed their minds about the ultimatum they had issued to the Turkish ruler. They wrote the following letter to him:

Dear Padişah,

We have learned that someone here wrote you a dispatch a short while ago in which certain of your cities were demanded. The dispatch included a threat of war if the demand was not met.

We do not know yet who it was that wrote the dispatch. When we discover who did this, we shall punish him very severely. We are making no demands whatsoever upon you.

This, then, was the way that the episode of the ultimatum was closed.

Time passed. One day news reached İstanbul about rebellious activity being carried on at Baghdad. The padişah called a meeting of his viziers and Köprülü Paşa to discuss

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ways of handling this problem. The padişah said to them "Find a man who is able to solve our Baghdad crisis."

Some of the viziers responded, "Oh, Veli Paşa is especially suited to deal with this sort of matter."

Others said, "No, no! Osman Paşa is much better suited for this kind of difficulty."

Still others said, "Neither of them is as well equipped for this kind of assignment as Ali Paşa is."

But when it was the turn of the Black Vizier to speak, he said, "No, no! Only the Door Opener can perform effectively this kind of duty." (He meant Crazy Mehmet, and he called him Door Opener because he recalled how the young man had kicked open the guest-room door when he /the Black Vizier/ had visited Mehmet's father, Çapanoğlu. They wrote a letter to Çapanoğlu in which they said, "Çapanoğlu, send your son Mehmet to İstanbul. As soon as Çapanoğlu received this letter, he sent Crazy Mehmet to İstanbul."

When Crazy Mehmet reached that city, he was immediately taken into the presence of the padişah, Köprülü Paşa, the Black Vizier, and the other ten viziers. The Black Vizier said to him, "Son, Mehmet Celâl, walk over there to that opposite wall."

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Mehmet Celâl walked to the opposite wall of the room. After that they gave him a horse's tail¹⁶ as an emblem of his rank. Then they had him walk to the opposite wall twice more and thus Mehmet Celâl acquired three horse tails and the rank that went with them.¹⁷ They then gave him his orders. They said, "We have learned that Baghdad is in a state of revolt against our government. Your duty is to go down there and straighten out that matter for us. You may take any number of troops you think you will need."

It was in this way that Mehmet Celâl became Celâl Paşa. Ordering his commanders to proceed to Baghdad at once, Celâl Paşa himself detoured to Yozgat. When he reached Yozgat, he announced publicly that he was looking for a secretary who could write cursive script very clearly and beautifully. Every secretary in the area came to Celâl Paşa's house to

¹⁶ From very early tribal times the horse tail was a symbol of rank among Turkic peoples. The number of tails for a given rank varied over the centuries, but they continued in use well into the 19th century. The sultan always had the highest number of horse tails; those in less important positions of command had proportionately fewer tails. These tails were mounted, like banners, atop a staff which was erected before the official's tent and carried before him into battle. The Turkish word for this horse tail was tuğ.

¹⁷ We sense some omission here or some custom of which we are ignorant. Is there some ritual in the conferring of tuğs that involves walking back and forth? There is no hint of an explanation in the text.

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take the examination for this job, but Celâl Paşa did not like the performance of any of them. None of them was able to write in a way that was really beautiful. At last, however, someone told him about one Necip who had come to Yozgat from Erzurum. It was said to him, "No one else can write as beautifully as Necip can."

Celâl Paşa called for Necip and, when he arrived, asked him to write something. Celâl Paşa was astonished with his writing and said, "Necip, my son, prepare to travel. We are going to Baghdad."

But Necip was not at all interested in going to Baghdad, for he was a newly wed husband. He had been married to his bride, Ayşe, for only six months. Poor Necip began to plead with Celâl Paşa, "Please, my Paşa, do not do this to me! I cannot go with you, for I am newly wed. Furthermore, I do not have any relative in this city to whom I can entrust my wife. Do not force me to go with you."

But Celâl Paşa refused to accept any of his excuses. He repeated, "Necip, you must come with me to Baghdad!"

This Necip had a friend--the man was also a distant relative--who was a very wealthy tobacco trader. Necip went to his friend, whose name was Ömer, when he realized that there was no way of avoiding the trip to Baghdad. He said, "Oh, Ömer, I am forced to leave my home and my new wife for

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a time. While I am away I shall entrust my wife, Ayşe, to your care. Keep an eye on her, and provide for her needs. Help her until I return. May God protect her!"

Tobacconist Ömer said, "Very well

Shortly after that, Celâl Paşa and Necip left Yozgat for Baghdad. They were to stay there much longer than they had expected to stay. Necip did not write to his wife, but after three years had passed, he wrote to his friend Ömer and asked about his wife, Ayşe. He wrote, "Brother, give me some news about my home and about my wife. How is Ayşe? What is she doing?"

It was not until he had received Necip's letter that Tobacconist Ömer remembered that he had promised to take care of Ayşe. He had given no thought to her welfare and safety during that whole period of three years. He said to himself, "Oh, alas I promised to look into Ayşe's condition periodically, but I have forgotten to do so! I shall go to her house right away tomorrow to see how she is

He went to Ayşe's house early the next morning. He got there while she was still combing her side locks, and he observed how very beautiful she was. Tobacconist Ömer took one look at Ayşe and he immediately fell in love with her. He now began to visit Ayşe three or four times a day, and each time he went to her house he took a gift of some kind: a box of candy, a bag of nuts, a basket of fruit.

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grew somewhat suspicious of his intentions, and one day she said to him, "Ömer (Ağa), three years passed after Necip's departure without your coming to my house even once. What has happened now? Suddenly you are visiting me three or four times a day. I cannot understand this change. What is the reason for it?"

Tobacconist Ömer said, "Ah, Ayşe, don't you know? When anyone goes to a foreign country, he is considered a dead person. Is it possible that you didn't understand why I started visiting you so often? You should know my intention."

Very upset, Ayşe said, "If that is the reason you are coming, then I don't need your help, and I don't want your help. I should prefer to die of hunger! Now leave my house immediately!"

As Tobacconist Ömer was leaving, Ayşe very angrily slammed the door shut. She did so, however, before Ömer had passed completely through the doorway, and as a result, his heel was caught in the door. It was not only pinched by the door, but it was also cut quite badly. Very angry, and suffering from the pain in his heel, Ömer shouted, "You will pay for this! I shall do something to you that will be talked about until Doomsday!"

Tobacconist Ömer knew that Necip had a brother living in Erzurum. He now wrote a letter to Necip, pretending that it

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was Necip's brother who had written it. This is what was written in the letter:

Declaration: False

Necip, my dear brother, I came here to Yozgat from Erzurum to see you, but I was unable to find you. Then I learned that you had been taken to Baghdad by Celâl Paşa some time before my arrival

I wish now that I had never come here. Your bride, Ayşe, has turned out to be an utterly shameless woman. I did not realize that until I arrived here on this visit. She has established intimate relationships with men both young and old in this town. It is something that I wish I had never seen.

Tobacconist Ömer then signed the name of Necip's brother at the end of this letter

When Necip read this letter, he said nothing to Celâl Paşa about it, but he immediately sent a divorce declaration to Ayşe. He did not send it to her directly but through Tobacconist Ömer. Ömer took the divorce papers to Ayşe's house and said to her, "Your husband has divorced you. This

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house is no longer your home. Return to your father's house."¹⁸ He slapped her a few times and forced her out of the house. Helpless, Ayşe had no choice but to return to her father's home. After six months had passed, Tobacconist Ömer married Ayşe, but he had to use force in order to do so.

Now let us return to Necip. Necip grew sicker and sicker with the passing of each day, and as he grew sicker and sicker, he also became thinner and thinner. He became so thin that he looked like a needle and thread. He reached the point at which he was nothing but skin and bones. Celâl Paşa grew greatly concerned about his health, and he called all the famous doctors and surgeons to find some cure for Necip's illness. They all tried to find some remedy for his sickness, but their efforts were in vain. Necip's sickness continued to get worse

Finally one day Celâl Paşa said once more to Necip something which he had already said several times earlier: "Necip, my son, if you do not reveal your problem, there is

¹⁸ This may seem to be an unrealistically brief and unfair divorce proceeding. This is a modern and Western judgment, however. Until recently--in Turkey that means until the founding of the Republic in the twentieth century --women had no rights in the matter of divorce. To divorce his wife a man had only to announce to her three times, in the presence of witnesses, "I divorce you." The wife had no recourse.

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no way in which it can be solved. Tell your problem to me. Perhaps I can do something to help you."

Necip had been keeping Tobacconist Ömer's letter under his pillow. He now got it out and showed it to Celâl Paşa. Celâl Paşa read the letter and then he asked, "Son, what you write in response to this letter?"

Necip said, "My Paşa, I at once sent a declaration of divorce to Ayşe."

Celâl Paşa became very sad when he heard this. He said to Necip, "Ah-h-h, my son. What should I say to you now? You should not have done that. You should have given the letter to me. I would then have had a secret search made to determine if there was any truth to what the letter said. If it was true, I would have gotten the padişah's daughter for you. Why did you do this? Why did you divorce your wife before searching out the facts of the matter? How could you believe so completely such a letter?"

Celâl Paşa had some of his men construct a very comfortable traveling hammock. After they had placed Necip in this bed, Celâl Paşa said to him, "Necip, Son, they will carry you to Yozgat. I shall come to Yozgat myself very soon also. May God give you a good trip! May God protect you on your journey and give you renewed health!"

Story

The news about Necip's coming reached Yozgat before Necip himself arrived there. His friends went to his house to get the place ready for his arrival. Because nobody had been living there for some time, everything in the house was covered with dust and dirt. They cleaned it as well as they could.

At last Necip reached home. He looked very thin lying in his traveling hammock, as thin and small as a bee in a large sack. They put him in his own bed and asked him how he felt. He said, "Friends, do not ask me about my feelings. Do not ask me how I am. You can see for yourselves that I am dying. Just call Ayşe for me. I should like to see her for the last time.

They sent a messenger to Tobacconist Ömer requesting that he send Ayşe to visit Necip. But Ömer refused to let her go. He said, "No, I cannot allow her to go. She is my wife now, and for her to go to visit Necip would be a great sin.

This answer made Necip's friends very angry. They said among themselves, "Come, friends. Inasmuch as Tobacconist Ömer caused Necip's sickness, let us go and stab him to death.

While they were talking in this way about killing Ömer one of Ömer's friends overheard them. He went immediately

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to Tobacconist Ömer and said, "Ömer, if you do not let Ayşe Necip, his friends intend to come here and kill you. If I were you, I should let Ayşe go to see Necip. Anyway, he is a very sick man and will die soon. He cannot possibly live very long."

When Tobacconist Ömer heard that Necip's friends might come and kill him, he changed his mind and decided to permit Ayşe to visit Necip. But he did not allow Ayşe to go alone. He sent with her his sister and an armed black servant. He said to the armed servant, "If Ayşe should say even a single word to Necip, cut off her head immediately."

They came to Necip's house. Necip's friends said to "Necip, your Ayşe has come!"

Necip half straightened up in his deathbed. Now let us listen to what he said:

I shall tell my tale to the black-eyed one.

Necip lies in ruins. But why don't you speak?

The moth hovers close to the candle's flame.

Necip lies in ruins. Buy why don't you speak?

The flame of my heart has come to me.

Necip lies in ruins. But why won't she speak?

A balm for my body and soul has come.

Necip lies in ruins. But why won't she speak?

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Remove the veil that hides your face.
Wipe off your tears. Don't make me cry
I shall wail for you till Doomsday comes.
Necip lies in ruins. But why don't you speak?

My beloved, my Ayşe, walk about--
Let your tresses sweep along the floor.
Loosen the sash that binds your breast.
Once you were mine, but now you are--whose?

She pulls her veil across her face.
Her sister-in-law some threat holds forth.
She comes to me with shackled tongue.
Necip lies in ruins. Why won't she speak?

My life now fades; my soul now sinks
I know the fault, the guilty one.
You came not soon to see me--why?
Necip lies in ruins. Why don't you speak?

My grave is dug my soul still lingers
Thank God my love stands by me now
I pray that God won't take my soul.
Necip lies in ruins. Why don't you speak?

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Your blackened brows, your gorgeous eyes,
Your beauty too will disappear.
And I'll not come this way again.
Necip lies in ruins. Why can't you speak?

After Ayşe had listened to Necip's lament, she pointed secretly at the armed black man. Necip's friends now understood the situation. They rushed upon the black man, who had now drawn his scimitar, and cut off his head. They threw his head into the coal cellar.

Then Ayşe began to speak. What did she say? Let us listen to her words.

I never left the way of right.
Necip, I put no henna¹⁹ on my hands.
I saw no other men but you,
And hoped that you would come again
I took offense when you came not.
But that I must not speak of now.

You held a pencil in one hand
A pen stood in the other.
The language lay upon your tongue

¹⁹ A reddish dye used to decorate the hands of brides.

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And conversation filled your mouth
But loving words you sent me not.
I'll speak not now of this offense.

Now I have come. Raise up your head
That I may kiss your frowning brow.
O, I have witnessed your black dream,
Have known it for too long a time.
Your lack of faith offended me.
But that I will not speak of now.

When first I walked into this room,
I came here, Necip, as your bride.
Your lion gaze was softened then,
And only love flowed from your eyes.
But villain's words misled those eyes
And turned them from the path of right

I was offended by this loss,
But that I shall not speak of now.
Whatever has destroyed our lives
Came to us from an evil source
Forget all sorrow now, rejoined
In love for all eternity.

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It was only a short time after that that Necip drew his last breath and was placed in his grave. A week after Necip's death Celâl Paşa returned to Yozgat and asked about Necip's health. When he was told that Necip had died a week earlier, Celâl Paşa felt both very sad and very angry. He asked, "What was the cause of this tragedy?"

people said to him, "Tobacconist Ömer was the sole cause of Necip's death."

After he had learned as much as he could about this, Celâl Paşa invited all the friends of Necip to assemble at the cemetery. Tobacconist Ömer was also taken there. They tied Ömer's feet together very tightly and then tied them to the rear end of a mule. Everyone then did everything he could to frighten the mule and make it gallop about. As the mule ran here and there among the gravestones, it dashed Tobacconist Ömer to pieces. But the only thing that this achieved was the death of Ömer, for there was nothing now that could restore Necip to them

Poor Ayşe! She mourned so grievously Every day she went to the grave of Necip, and there she wept all day long until darkness came. Time passed in this way, but after six months, Celâl Paşa could not bear to see her grief continue

Epitaph

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He had her married to someone else, and she became a bride at Sungürlü.²⁰

I have some friends and neighbors who knew Ayşe. One of them, a woman named Şevket, knew her especially well. She said to me, "I once saw Ayşe with my own eyes. She had grown old and had become a shepherdess. She said to me, 'Hey, look at me! I am Ayşe, the one who was Necip's wife.'"

I saw in a dream a curious thing.

Neither I nor others could tell what it meant.

I saw two hands that were raised up to God.

Neither I nor others could know what was said.

Ah, my heart's desire, my heart's hot stream,

There is the power of God in a dream.

I sought in the city a key to this dream,

But neither a death nor disaster was known.

The nightingale folds like a robe round the rose.

A girl is a mystery that nobody knows.

The questions of lovers are never in doubt

But the answers too often are never found out.

²⁰ Sungürlü is a kaza town just slightly northwest of Yozgat Province in Çorum Province.